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ABSTRACT

A broad spectrum of stakeholders in Uzbekistan were interviewed to identify areas in which Winrock International's Farmer-to-Farmer program volunteers could be targeted to help Uzbeks complete the transition to privatized farms. The interviews revealed that Uzbeks have a much broader conception of the "farm" than do people in Western countries and a qualitatively different view toward the concept of management. Rather than desiring training to help individual farmers enhance on-the-farm productivity, the Uzbeks interviewed wanted training/assistance designed from a perspective of "farm" that includes the farm family and farm community and emphasizes farmers' management of new inputs and outputs. The Uzbeks interviewed clearly distinguished between "directive" and "management" orientations. In view of these findings, the following recommendations were made: (1) teams of farmers who are willing and able to venture into whole-farm management responsibilities should be selected as short-course participants; (2) training curricula should incorporate on-farm demonstrations and experiments as means of "instruction"; (3) Uzbek and U.S. faculty should be selected and trained to work in teams; and (4) a problem approach (case method) should be used to facilitate on-farm integration of the technical, financial, social, and legal constraints governing Uzbekistan's evolving agricultural system. (MN)

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In Uzbekistan, is it Farm Management or FARM Management?

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by

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Introduction

Since its independence from the USSR in 1991, the Republic of Uzbekistan in Central Asia has set a policy to privatize collective and state farms. Its earlier, industrial-type agriculture had emphasized production of raw cotton for export. Consequences have included severe damage to land, water, human health, and communities. (Feshbach & Friendly, 1992).

The privatization process, overseen by the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), provides in-depth, noncredit farm management short courses for privatizing farmers. The MOA has contracted with the country's leading agricultural university -- Tashkent State Agricultural University -- to coordinate the series of short courses.

USAID's volunteer Farmer-to-Farmer (FTF) Program, coordinated in Uzbekistan by Winrock International (WI), has offered to supply volunteer specialists from the U.S. to supplement the instructional faculty. Our team identified areas in which WI's FTF program volunteers could be targeted effectively.

Purpose:

This paper introduces what we discovered:

1. a much larger conception of "farm" than we had anticipated, and

2. a qualitatively different view toward "management."

Methodology

In August 1993, the three-person Farm Management Training Consultant team* from the U.S. interviewed a wide spectrum of stakeholders in Uzbekistan: authorities in the MOA, local government officials, national bank officers, university administrators and faculty, and farmers privatizing their assets and management. Throughout, we read government and farm-level documentation of emerging policies.

Results and Conclusions

A Broader Conception of "Farm." Before our arrival, our thinking was oriented toward training for individual farmers to enhance on-the-farm productivity. Soon we were introduced to the Uzbek's intent since independence to also (a) improve the quality of inputs, (b) initiate value-added processing of farm products and by-products, (c) more carefully consider the well-being of farm families, the viability of farm communities, and the quality of their natural environment, and (d) search for interdependencies among all these components.

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*Our well-balanced team included the two authors and John A. Taylor, Agribusiness Manager, Prairie du Sac, Wisconsin, 53578.

Orientation	Farm Systems		
	Inputs ⇒⇒	"Farm" ⇒⇒	Outputs
Individual	2	1. We started here	
Family			3
Community	4		5

Here are illustrations of our growing awareness of what Uzbeks consider important in other cells above:

2. On the input side, we discovered how eager Uzbek vegetable farmers were to acquire and test improved genetic materials, how anxious dairy farmers were to produce higher quality forages and how intent grape growers were to reduce their input costs.

3. On the output side, we saw that in order to add value to their produce, farm families were acquiring small cotton weaving equipment and were teaching youth to fabricate socks, scarves, and mittens for export. Dairy managers asked us about small scale milk processing equipment that their families could operate.

4. We heard about the formation of new farmer-initiated and farmer-directed cooperatives to manage district level irrigation and fertilizer systems more efficiently.

5. We noted that an established percentage of the profit from a private collective farm was allocated yearly to community-building investments.

Whereas we initially focused on training for individuals responsible for on-farm production, we soon acquired the Uzbek's perspective of "farm" that included the farm family and farm community and emphasized the farmers' management of new inputs and outputs.

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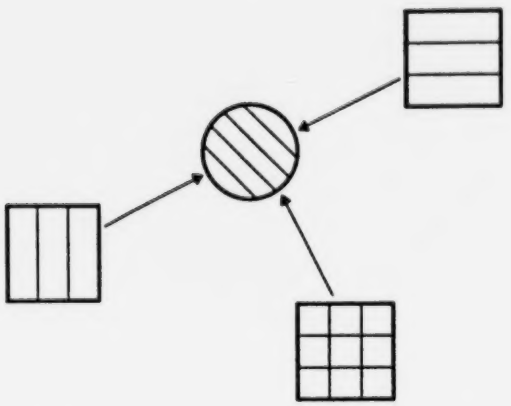
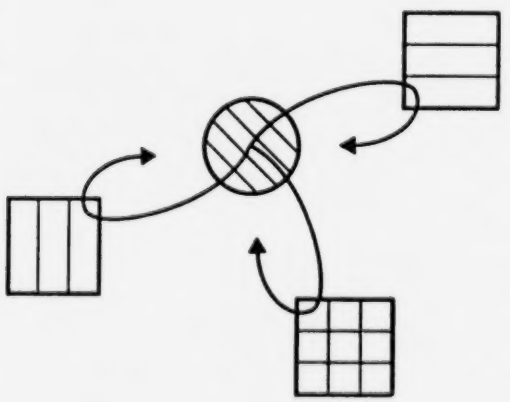
A Reorientation Toward "Management"

We also came to appreciate that Uzbeks clearly distinguished between (A) a "directive" and (B) a "management" orientation toward farming and intentionally chose to adopt the management approach:

A: Directive orientation in which farmers' decisions are dictated by multiple authorities, for example, local governments, ministries, lending authorities:



B: Management orientation to farmer-as-decision maker, in which farmers reach out for information and counsel to make entrepreneurial decisions:



The Uzbek's distinct shift from a directive to a management orientation to farming became apparent to us:

- as we talked with an economics instructor at Tashkent State Agricultural University, who is adapting a management-oriented curriculum,

- when, at a regional agricultural college, we interviewed a small group of administrators and faculty seeking to realign a discipline-based curriculum into useful management-oriented modules,

- during our conversations with local government officials who supported the development of farmer associations that assumed responsibilities formerly assigned to government, and

- as we walked the fields, vineyards and paddocks with farmers who, themselves, were learning to manage more effectively -- and proud of it!

In conclusion, we discovered that Uzbek agriculturalists had (1) broadened their perspective of "farm" to include management of higher quality inputs and value-added outputs, (2) deepened their outlook of farm to include farm family and farm community, (3) oriented their view toward the farmer as an entrepreneurial decision maker, and (4) began to explore ways for farmers and public authorities to cooperate in shifting from an industrial to an entrepreneurial agriculture in Uzbekistan.

Educational Importance

Integrating this larger view of "farm" and this qualitatively different conception of farm "managment" suggested direct implications for farm management education:

- First, the choice of farmers as short course participants. We recommended that farmers be selected who are willing and able to venture into whole-farm management responsibilities; and we suggested that teams of farmers be chosen.

- Second, design of the curricula. We suggested that Winrock International support on-farm demonstrations and experiments as a means of "instruction."

- Third, selection and development of Uzbek and U.S. faculty. We advised TSAU and Winrock to involve teams of faculty, advisors and consulting specialists from the US in on-farm assessments, demonstrations and experiments to develop the faculty's preparedness to teach whole-farm management.

- Fourth, relationships among all stakeholders in the nation's agricultural systems. We recommended that a problem approach -- a case method -- be used in teaching to facilitate the on-farm integration of the technical, financial, social and legal constraints always in flux.

In summary, our brief month as a team in Uzbekistan offered us instructive insights into the scope of Uzbekistan's "farms" and into her new orientation toward "management." These insights, in turn, helped us shape our recommendations for US support of farm management education in this newly independent Republic in Central Asia. We're eager to observe her progress.

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